LWV LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS® ALA American Library Association READER. VOTER. READY.

A GUIDE TO
Civic Collaboration

Democracy doesn't end when polls close.

Our system of government that is *of the people, by the people, and for the people* requires elected representatives to be in regular contact with their constituents, and that those constituents have a voice on issues that impact them. Keeping communities connected, informed, and heard is work that libraries and Leagues around the country undertake every day, with a long history of collaborating to expand their reach and deepen their impact. The American Library Association (ALA) and the League of Women Voters (LWV) are committed to supporting, celebrating, and growing that work.

ABOUT OUR ORGANIZATIONS

American Library Association | ala.org

(ALA) is the only non-partisan, nonprofit organization dedicated entirely to America's libraries and library professionals. For almost 150 years, ALA has provided resources to inspire library and information professionals to transform their communities through essential programs and services. The ALA serves academic, public, school, government, and special libraries, advocating for the profession and the library's role in enhancing learning and ensuring access to information for all.

For generations, America's library professionals have supported civic participation in communities across the country. Find more information at: **ala.org/advocacy/reader-voter-ready**.

League of Women Voters | lwv.org

LWV is a nonpartisan organization that has fought since 1920 to empower voters and defend democracy. It conducts voter registration, education, mobilization, and protection activity at the national, state, and local level through 700+ Leagues in all 50 states and the District of Columbia and US Virgin Islands. With more than a million members and supporters, the League is one of the most trusted nonpartisan voices in the elections landscape with deep grassroots in every corner of America.

CIVIC PROGRAMMING

OPPORTUNITIES TO PARTNER

Local Leagues and libraries partner to offer a range of nonpartisan civic activities that meet the specific needs of their communities. Some of these programs are pre-designed; others are custom created. As experts in their communities, local librarians and League members are positioned to identify what will best serve their communities.

1. Collaboration begins with communication.

Libraries should identify their primary local or state League contact; Leagues should identify their local library contact. Discuss priorities and identify opportunities to collaborate that reflect the strengths and capacity of each organization. Where appropriate, formalize your partnership with a written agreement.

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READER. VOTER. READY.
Election Collaboration Toolkit
VOTE
The American Library Association (ALA) and the League of Women Voters (LWV) are partnering to engage, educate, and empower voters. We've created this toolkit to make it easier to connect voters to trusted, nonpartisan election information and to help local Leagues and libraries partner together (or partner even more!) to encourage and expand civic participation.

For ideas on how libraries and local leagues can partner on election activities and share accurate, non-partisan information with voters, visit the ALA/ LWV Election Collaboration Toolkit:

▶ bit.ly/ALA-LWV-e

2. Start small.

Look at the upcoming calendar, what is happening in your community, and what its civic needs are. Do not overcommit; start with one co-hosted event, or with a printed resource to distribute. Build on successes and, when necessary, readjust. Establish clear expectations about what each organization will be responsible for and remain flexible to adjust as necessary.

3. Measure your progress.

Establish a few key metrics and make a plan to collect qualitative data as well. Schedule time to collect staff and volunteer feedback, and debrief after activities. Discuss what is working well, what can be improved, and what the next step is for your partnership.

4. Spread the word!

Where possible, share information across organizations about joint and separate activities. Inform other organizations, elected officials, and community leaders about the collaborative activities of the library and League; and invite the media to visit and learn about your impact. See the ALA/LWV Election Collaboration Toolkit at left for templates and tools.

Where you start will depend on where you are. Build from there! There's no single path to a successful local partnership, and there are many strong examples of work already underway that can inspire your planning.

PROGRAMS

Civic programming can advance the strategic priorities of both organizations, particularly those related to education and democratic participation.

- Book discussion groups
- Civics 101 classes
- Local candidate training
- Local, state, federal or international policy discussions
- Mis- and disinformation trainings

You may wish to create a custom program, or you can collaborate using already developed programs from ALA, LWV, or external organizations. Here are just a few of many options.

- ALA Public Programs Office's Media Literacy Education in Libraries: ala.org/tools/programming/MediaLiteracy
- LWV's mis- and disinformation training, the Democracy Truth Project: lwv.org/educating-voters/democracy-truth-project

"How to Run for Public Office" Training

In North Dakota, West Fargo Public Library and the League of Women Voters of Red River Valley team up to present "How to Run for Public Office," a training to help prospective candidates learn the nuts and bolts of running for local election. The program has yielded an increase in candidates for local offices, and a training template that has been adopted by other Leagues and libraries in the region.

▶ bit.ly/west-fargo

Thinking Globally?

Libraries and Leagues across the country bring timely and thought-provoking discussions to their communities with the Great Decisions Program developed by the Foreign Policy Association. The nation's largest discussion group on world affairs, Great Decisions offers reading selections, videos, questions, and a guide to structure this multi-week exploration of global issues and how they impact us.

▶ fpa.org/great-decisions

- News Literacy Project: newslit.org
- Foreign Policy Association's Great Decisions Program: fpa.org/great-decisions

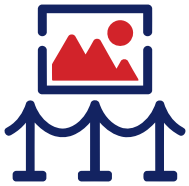
EVENTS

Libraries and Leagues also can co-host activities that connect communities with elected officials, with local resources, or with a deeper understanding of how their government works

- Town halls with local officials
- Panels with local journalists
- ID clinics
- Community resource fairs
- Civics competitions

EXHIBITS

Exhibits provide an opportunity to spotlight people, issues, and events that are important to the civic fabric of your community, and that people can access over an extended period.

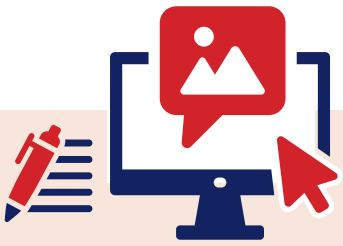


- Local history timelines
- Civic leaders galleries
- Event commemorations
- Suggested reading displays

Forum with elected officials

In Illinois, the Glenview Public Library partners regularly with the League of Women Voters Glenview-Glencoe to host informational forums with elected officials. A recent event, in cooperation with Northbrook Public Library and Glencoe Public Library, featured a panel of state legislators who provided an update and answered questions on proposed, pending, and recently passed legislation.

▶ bit.ly/lvw-glenview



COMMUNICATIONS TOOLKIT

▶ **bit.ly/ALA-LWV-toolkit**

Together, local Leagues and libraries can promote specific events as well as the availability of high-quality election information. This ALA-LWV toolkit contains bookmarks, flyers, and palm cards for you to print and share, a social media toolkit, and a press release template to promote your collaborative election activities. Please also share your work with ALA and LWV by tagging us on social media and using the hashtags **#ReaderVoterReady** and **#VOTE411**.